

## **MRS Eastern Expansion Meeting**

May 17, 2004  
Wilson County DSS

Counties Present: Halifax, New Hanover, Harnett, Wake, Lee, Pasquotank, Martin, Scotland, Warren, Orange, Wilson, Caswell, Durham  
State Staff: Tony Troop, Keith Davis, Tony Amos, Carl Breazeale, Gwen Burns, Susan Moss, Gale Trevathan, Renee Hanna

### **State Updates**

- Training Surveys
  - Ruth Harrison emailed these to the contact person that was given to Tony.
  - Counties should return these to Ruth so that the state can get accurate information for planning training for next year.
- Data Entry – 5104, 5027, day sheets
  - Stressed that it is important to complete these correctly, and also ensure that they are keyed correctly. Otherwise, one mistake can possibly throw off all the numbers.

### **Where are we?**

- Tony stressed the need to not tell the state ‘what you think the state wants to hear’. Instead, counties should be straightforward – that is the only way that these meetings can be helpful and provide a learning environment.
- Today’s questions focus more on how MRS is affecting families and children.

### **How are you getting strengths on the intake forms? Are there any ‘magic questions’?**

#### Halifax

- The strengths really only get addressed if the full time intake worker takes the call because she asks follow up questions that people filling in tend not to ask.

#### Duplin

- Not really a problem getting strengths. Everyone asks follow up questions and tells reporters that *all* families have strengths.

#### New Hanover

- They are not getting this question answered well, and probably not asking it well. This is an area they should probe more.
- Tend to get backhanded strengths “they abuse the system well”

#### Harnett

- Quality of responses varies – the position of intake worker is currently vacant so they are having to rotate among all Children's Services staff.
- Believe the overall consistency and quality is better with a full-time worker.
- Also varies according to who the reporter is, schools are particularly poor for providing strengths.

#### Wake

- Sometimes hard to get good information because the reporters, particularly professionals, don't know the families that well. When it is a family member they can provide them better.

#### Lee

- Their intake worker gives examples of strengths to try and draw reporter out. Asks questions such as "Can you tell me anything good going on with the family?"

#### Pasquotank

- Ask follow up questions, but response really depends on the reporter.

#### Martin

- Reporters that have more interaction with the family are more likely to provide them.
- One sign of a possible malicious report is a refusal to consider that the family has strengths.

#### Warren

- Person present today has not seen a lot of the intake reports. Her impression is that it is pretty thorough.

#### Orange

- They have a specific worker for intake, but the person present today does not know specifically about this area.

#### Wilson

- Have done a lot of training with community partners letting them know they should be looking for strengths and that the intake workers will be asking for them.

#### Caswell

- Flow of questions on the form not conducive to bringing out strengths, have to backtrack. May not have a lot of time to coax strengths out of the reporter.

**Tony: Has there been a significant increase in the time needed for intake?**

- Generally yes, but its more thorough.
- Harnett – said they have noticed more pages for backup intake.
- Wilson – there are other time consuming issues besides just taking the call. Because the form is longer entering on computer, copying etc. also takes longer.
- About 5 or 6 counties have automated intake, but suspect many people writing it down and typing it in later.
- Tony shared that front loading time on intake saves time later.
- Wake – the new intake doesn't take longer that a thorough old intake used to, the difference is that you can't do the quick 5 minute call that was possible before. Find that the bulk of their calls are between 12 and 3:30.
- Counties are finding that professionals, particularly schools do not want to give strengths. Some even give the information they want to and then hang up.
- Concern came up about a change in the reporting laws – schools used to report children that had missed more than 28 days of school to Juvenile Justice, now it is a DSS report. Wake is just filing them if there is no other CPS concern, would like some protocol.
  - Tony looked at policy, 115C 378, if the school has not filed a complaint, DSS does not have to take the report as a valid CPS complaint.

**How do you choose which approach to assign Family Assessment eligible cases to? Or, if you have not started yet, how do you plan to assign cases?**

Caswell

- Have not started, still talking with the director about protocol for assigning cases.

Wilson

- Gave a handout.

Orange

- Starting on July 1, still working out details of how they will assign.

Warren

- Person at meeting today from Foster Care. She was not sure how they were deciding which ones to assign to Family Assessment, but knew they were.

Scotland

- Haven't started yet, have not made a decision. Will meet with all workers to determine protocol.

Martin

- Talking about selecting certain allegations and easing into it. Will probably select some of the most common allegations.

Pasquotank

- Did a couple, decided that they needed to have more groundwork in place, so holding off until July 1 to implement.

Lee

- Have not started, but already using things they have learned in training.

Wake

- Have 6 service areas, starting Family Assessment in 2 of them (most urban and most rural – one the Casey area, both have some of the most seasoned staff). Going to give supervisors the ability to take any cases as Family Assessment that meet policy guidelines.

Harnett

- None yet. Planning to start June 1, but there have been a lot of things happening, including a sharp increase in placements, so delaying start.

New Hanover

- Neglect will generally be Family Assessment but look at it case by case. (Started all at once, didn't pick allegations.)

Dulpin

- Have not started yet. Asked Wilson county about DV and did that screen out a lot of Family Assessment cases. (Rita said its more case by case.)

Halifax

- Still in planning stages.

**Tony: Who has seen a dramatic increase in the number of kids coming into Foster Care in the last 3 months?**

- 7 counties have
- Also the case in the West
- Increase in DV and substance abuse as well

**How do you accomplish successful criminal prosecutions?**

First, what is 'successful' when it comes to criminal prosecution? After some discussion determined it to be "holding perpetrators accountable in a timely manner while protecting child victims". So, changed the question a little to:

**How do you get perpetrators prosecuted and keep children from getting re-victimized? (Also, how long does it take to get a case prosecuted.)**

#### Halifax

- Have pro-child judges, still takes 1-2 years for prosecution.
- Work with Child Advocacy Centers, also do joint interviews with Law Enforcement.

#### Duplin

- Juveniles often do not seem to be a political priority.

#### New Hanover

- Talk about cases with Community Child Protection Teams, Law Enforcement, and ADAs.
- Just finished MOA with Law Enforcement
- Work with Child Advocacy Centers, also do joint interviews with Law Enforcement.

#### Harnett

- Meet with Law Enforcement and ADAs on a regular basis but so far can't tell if it really helps month to month.
- No Child Advocacy Centers.

#### Wake

- Multidisciplinary team run by DA's office.
- In his opinion, therapeutic sentencing is needed because jail doesn't stop the behaviors and when these guys get out they often perp again.

#### Lee

- New detectives that used to be in uniform that worked with Social Workers previously are the best help.
- Work with Child Advocacy Centers, also do joint interviews with Law Enforcement.

#### Pasquotank

- Have decreased time for prosecution from 2 years to 1 year. Get a lot of pleas.
- Have a Child Advocacy Center.

#### Martin

- The key is partnership with Law Enforcement.
- ADAs on CCPT.
- Work with Child Advocacy Centers, also do joint interviews with Law Enforcement to limit the number of interviews.

#### Scotland

- This is a real struggle. Cited a case where the police refuse to pursue case any further.

Warren

- Not many case of that nature.

Orange

- Have a lot of communication with Law Enforcement. CCPTs and monthly Law Enforcement meeting.
- Law Enforcement also goes out with social workers.

Wilson

- Have to get Law Enforcement and ADAs to the table. DSS cannot force this. The DA can always come up with reasons not to prosecute.
- Some of the problem is that the justice system treats children the same as adults, they are forced to recount something from years ago as a witness that they have tried to put behind them in therapy. Continually revictimized.
- Most of the problem is the ADA and judicial system, rather than police (although not always). ADA's need to be educated about child victims.
- The state needs to put the same emphasis on child victims (particularly of sexual abuse) that the Governor gave to DV.

Caswell

- Planning first meeting with Law Enforcement and ADA's
- No Child Advocacy Center.

Durham

- Struggling to get cases prosecuted.

**Tony: How do you build a good relationship with Law Enforcement? What would you do?**

- Get your MOA in place.
- Conduct joint interviews.
- Chief District Court judge in Orange county sent a memo to police dictating cooperation.
- Keith suggested getting community partners involved. That way these positions and ideas are coming to Law Enforcement and ADAs from other people in the community and not just DSS.

**Tony: When there are meetings with Law Enforcement, do you leave with a 'course of action'?**

- Yes from those that responded.

**Tony: How do you know when a family is also getting Work First services?**

- Tony Amos talked about Work First – DSS Social Workers have to know how their own county is organized and what Work First is and the

services that they can offer, also the requirements and restrictions Work First has.

- Monetary Only - only receiving money, no employment services
  - Child Only – placed child, or parent just not in the case
  - Employment Services
- To determine what services your county Work First provides:
  - Read the Work First county plan.
  - On-line Work First Manual
  - Meet with Work First manager
- Different counties have to do what works best for them.

Durham

- Theoretically families from the WF and DSS are in the system so workers can check to see if a family is already receiving services.

Wilson

- New CPS reports are checked against the monthly list of Work First cases. Asked if there was a similar report for DSS cases to the Work First workers.

New Hanover

- Local database that identifies all services for each person.

Wake

- Said that although each agency has a system, but this is no good unless you can understand the other's system which is not easy.

Duplin

- Each month they trade lists of open cases.

General Comments:

- Consensus Tony gets from Work First is that DSS only wants to get information from them, doesn't want to make it a two way street. DSS cites confidentiality as a reason not to share.
- Some counties remembered a letter from about 5 years ago that addressed this issue and said that information was confidential. Tony will look into that.
- Counties would like some legal and ethical direction. (Example: what is the confidentiality level with new Mental Health contractors?)
- Tony has also gotten feedback that Work First has not gotten the attention that some of the other MRS strategies have.

### **How are families engaged in their own in-home services planning?**

Wake

- In-home worker does almost a 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment, a well-being assessment.

#### Halifax

- Case planning/case management worker completes then plan in the home with the family.

#### Duplin

- Using Family Team Meetings which allows open discussion with which to develop plan with other agencies there.

#### New Hanover

- The worker who will ultimately keep the case does the plan with the family (if the investigator thinks the case will have 60+ days of services it is transferred to case management.)
- Question regarding services needed vs. services recommended.
  - Tony gave policy answer – all depends on safety issues, if there is a safety issue, it should be 'services needed', if there is not, should be 'services recommended'.

#### Harnett

- Started Family Group Conferencing so workers will be enthused about Child & Family Teams.

#### Lee

- Not sure family has as much input as they would eventually like.
- Question was asked "How do you move to the families having more input?"
  - New Hanover said it starts with the belief that families can have valid input. Have to be willing to let go of the power and trust the families as much as we want them to trust us.

#### Pasquotank

- 7 days meeting with the case planning worker and investigator, then the case planning worker meets with the family and develops plan based on the investigators information.

#### Martin

- Investigator and case planner go in together and case planner plays "good guy" in developing the plan with family.

#### Scotland

- Investigation and case planning the same, once substantiated go into the home and create the plan with the family.

#### Warren

- Emphasis on ownership to the family.



#### Orange

- Investigator and case planner go in together and then case planner works with family on plan.

#### Wilson

- Similar to other counties, CFT have helped.

#### Caswell

- Investigator also case planner.
- Talking about flexing schedules so that worker can meet family at times more convenient with them.

#### Durham

- Investigator and case planner don't have the time to go in together so case planner gets information from investigator and then does plan with family.
- In cases where placement is likely they use Team Decision Making (Casey county).

### **Wrap up**

- Wake county suggested sending the questions out prior to the meeting so that people could be better prepared to answer them. (If this is not a particular person's area they would find information and bring it to the meeting.)
- Tony said that if anyone has suggestions on a different way to structure these meetings, he is open to suggestions. Will always need to know where the counties are with respect to implementing the strategies.
- Question came up can the 10 attend these meetings? No, for several reasons:
  - The state asks a lot of the 10 already, they have their own meetings, do presentations, piloting work DV policy, etc.
  - Have buddy counties for specific questions, and according to the 10, expansion counties are not utilizing them in this way.
- June 30 – next meeting. All 52 counties, in Winston-Salem, the same place as last time.
- Next meetings for the Eastern Counties will be in this location on these dates: July 12, August 23, and October 18.
- We will meet from 10-1:30 with no break for lunch.